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TAGS: PREL PGOV PL RS

SUBJECT: POLISH PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO KATYN "CONSTRUCTIVE"
AND FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

REF: MOSCOW 4357

Classified By: Ambassador William Burns, for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary. DFM Titov characterized President Kaczynski's visit to Katyn as "constructive," noting that Kaczynski had depicted Katyn as an historical event and focused on the future of Russian-Polish relations. Titov also said that any request by Kaczynski to meet with Putin would have been rejected due to political considerations. The future of high-level visits remains unclear, as Kaczynski seemed to suggest an "informal" visit from Putin to Poland, followed by a formal visit by Kaczynski to Moscow, but the GOR is expecting to see Kaczynski first in Moscow. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In a September 19 meeting with the Ambassador, Deputy Foreign Minister Titov characterized the Polish President's approach to visiting Katyn and Smolensk on the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland in WW2 as "constructive" and "very friendly." Kaczynski delivered on his promise to depict Katyn as an historical event, with his visit focused on the future of Polish-Russian relations. Titov characterized the Polish request to meet with Putin on the margins of the visit as unrealistic, given the two week lead time, but candidly volunteered that politics would have driven a Russian refusal in any event. The GOR viewed the Kaczynski initiative through the prism of the Polish electoral calendar, with Titov adding that there was no realistic way to avoid the question of history should the Presidents have chosen their first formal engagement to be in Katyn.

¶3. (C) According to Titov, Polish officials were pleased with Kaczynski's reception. Polpred for Central Administrative Region Georgiy Poltavchenko, Titov, and Smolensk Governor Viktor Maslov were present for the visit, and welcomed the relatively moderate tone of the Polish President's statements ("we live thinking of the future, we remember the past, but think of it in a peaceful way"). A subsequent, vodka-lubricated reception (with the approval of Kaczynski's personal physician), produced toasts for Putin, friendship, Russia, and Poland. In an aside that he quickly disowned, Titov noted that Kaczynski's wife appeared to be the driving force behind any potential Polish-Russian rapprochement, an observation seconded by Polish Embassy officials, who told us that the friendship between the first ladies was a critical counterweight to the heavy political baggage of the last year.

¶4. (C) The Polish interpretation of protocol, Titov maintained, would complicate planning for a future high-level meeting. While Kaczynski said it was his turn to visit Moscow, he criticized his predecessor for making six "informal" visits to Russia, apparently unreciprocated. Kaczynski's staff spun the Polish President's comments as a pitch for Putin to make an "unofficial" visit, which would be reciprocated quickly with an official visit to Moscow by the

Polish President; Titov stressed, however, that the GOR would take Kaczynski at his word and expect to see him first in Moscow. During the Katyn program, Titov met with his counterpart, First Deputy Foreign Minister Pavel Kowal, and agreed to travel to Warsaw after the Polish elections. Titov noted that Polish FM Anna Fotyga -- a "charming lady, but a product of domestic politics" -- had yet to respond to the invitation extended by Lavrov in April.

¶5. (C) The Polish embassy considered the visit successful, particularly in light of the current state of relations. They noted that Kaczynski set a very specific tone in his speech, recognizing that Poland wants to have a productive relationship with Russia, but that the setting and date were chosen to remind Russia that Poland does not forget, and will not give up on issues of "moral importance." Polish Embassy representatives do "not exclude" the possibility of Kaczynski visiting Moscow in the near future, but gave no specifics.

Burns